



THE

KNIGHT



VOL. V. No. 1 Issue #25 The LITHUANIAN Numismatic Association

June-July 1982

SAMPLE PAGE

HELLO BOSTON (Labas)! L.N.A. MEETS at ANA CONVENTION AUGUST 20 !

ORDER OF VYTAUTAS

THE GREAT

By

Vincent W. Alones and Henry L. Gaidis

The Order of Vytautas the Great (Vytauto Didžiojo Ordinas) was established by the Republic of Lithuania in 1930 on the occasion of the 500th anniversary of the death of Grand Duke Vytautas the Great.

The introduction to the Statue establishing the Order reads as follows:

"Lithuania's hero Vytautas the Great, who by his efforts and skill, ingeniously established and created a powerful Lithuania, and reigned honorably for these his great undertakings, efforts, and services through the ages. This is for us to commemorate and to honor."

"Celebrating his 500th jubilee, his thankful descendants establish the Order of Vytautas the Great to encourage awakened Lithuania's children, in order that they might pursue his noble ideals."

Vytautas ruled Lithuania from 1392 to 1430, and organized the nation into a strong and powerful state. He expanded the boundaries from Lithuania's ethnic heartland from the Baltic Sea across the Ukrainian steppes to the shores of the Black Sea. He militarily defeated the Poles, Tartars, Russians, and the Teutonic Knights. His greatest feat occurred at Tannenberg in 1410, when he led

The Lithuanian Numismatic Association (that's US!!) will hold its 4th annual meeting on Friday, August 20, as part of the official schedule of the 91st convention of the American Numismatic Association (August 17-22). With the activities taking place in the Boston Sheraton, the LNA will meet at 10:00 AM in the Exeter A & B room.

Master of ceremonies for the meeting will be our own Lithuanian numismatist, Vincent Alones, who will be presenting a beautiful slide presentation entitled, "Lithuanian Paper Money of the 20th Century," featuring 70 color slides, including a full set of banknotes of the Republic of Lithuania. Included will be several PAVYZDYS specimen notes, as well as slides of the Panevėžys, Sėda, German Punktė, and UNRRA D.P. Camp money issues. Vince has a great time planned for all who attend! Expect some surprises, and be sure and bring your collections for "show and tell," and for a buy/sell/trade session after the meeting.

The public is welcome to attend the August 20 meeting, and Lithuanian-Americans from the greater Boston area are especially urged to attend! If you know of anyone in the area, let them know; they would be thrilled to see a presentation like this in their area! C. Matuzas is handling the publicity, and Vince is arranging the program. If you have any questions, write: Vince Alones, Box 887, New Hyde Park, N.Y. 11040. Remember, our 1st LNA meeting was in the New England area 4 years ago. We are really looking forward to seeing our LNA members and friends again! Spread the word and we'll SEE YOU THERE!!!!

About the LNA...

The Lithuanian Numismatic Association was organized in June of 1978, and has become one of the most active ethnic numismatic organizations. The LNA publishes a bi-monthly publication, The Knight, which contains 8 pages of news and information about Lithuanian coins, tokens, medals, paper money, and military decorations/orders. Members are also receiving each issue 30 pages of trans-

Continued on next page...

Above: OBVERSE, 3rd class (Commander) Order, presented to Dr. Alexander M. Račkus (Photo courtesy Balzekas Museum)

Continued on next page...

2 About the LNA...

lation into English of the book Senovės Lietuvių Pinigai (Ancient Lithuanian Money) by Jonas K. Karys (1959). The Knight contains a wealth of historical and numismatic information about Lithuanian money never before published in the English language. Currently the LNA is presenting a series of articles dealing with the Orders, Decorations, and Medals issued by the Republic of Lithuania. The information presented is a must for any collector or dealer.

Membership in the LNA is \$10 per year (June to May) in U.S. & Canada, \$20 overseas. Sign up with Vince Alones at the LNA meeting August 20 at the ANA convention, or write: LNA, P.O. Box 612, Columbia, Maryland, 21045. The LNA is a member of the American Numismatic Association (C-117903).



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THE KNIGHT. Vol. V. No. 1, Issue #25. The official publication of the Lithuanian Numismatic Association. Frank Passic, Tulsa, Oklahoma, EDITOR. Robert J. Douchis, Baltimore, Md., DIRECTOR. Subscription for 6 bi-monthly issues a donation of \$10 or more (U.S. & Canada), \$20 overseas. Write: The LNA, P.O. Box 612, Columbia, MD. 21045. Write us for a complete sample issue! This page is reproduced in quantity and distributed at the ANA convention.

Order of Vytautas the Great ...

the Lithuanian army & allies to a spectacular victory over the Teutonic Knights, and ended their threat to the Eastern European area.

In the five centuries following his death, Vytautas had become the most popular Lithuanian hero. A year long celebration resulted in 1930, with countless gatherings held in his honor. The government issued postage stamps, and the average citizen eagerly purchased the numerous table medals, souvenirs, medalets, and post cards bearing his name or picture.

The government seized the opportunity to link Vytautas forever as their greatest Lithuanian hero by the creation of this new decoration bearing his name. The decoration would further spread the glory of Vytautas by the fact that it would be awarded to both Lithuanians, and foreign citizens, to honor them for meritorious service to: 1) Lithuania, 2) the welfare of the Lithuanian nation, and/or 3) the common good of all mankind. As a result, this new order would be awarded countless world leaders. As in the case of all Lithuanian Orders, the issuance was regulated, based on the recommendation of the Council of Ministers and subject to the approval of the President of the Republic. Recipients of the order also received various honors, such as monetary rewards, pensions, and the publishing of their name in the Government News. Furthermore, a special honorary book preserving the awarding was maintained in the office of the President.

The awarding of the order was made in a formal setting at which time the recipient also received a corresponding numbered certificate. As with other Lithuanian Orders, the Order of Vytautas was designed by a Lithuanian, but produced by the firm of Huguenin Freres of LeLocle, Switzerland. Each order came in a velvet recessed simulated leather presentation case. Following the usual practice, a National Holiday for honoring the recipients of the Order was established, September 8 of each year. September 8, 1430, was the date Vytautas was to have been crowned King of Lithuania.

OBSERVE DESCRIPTION: The badge is a gold-rimmed, white enameled cross. The center area is crown shaped in red & gold enamel, and portrays in gold a stylized Lithuanian Vytis (knight), the symbol adopted by Vytautas.

REVERSE DESCRIPTION: The reverse is identical to the obverse, except in the center area it has the script capital letter "V," and the dates "1430-1930" on the left and right arms of the cross.

The badge is suspended from a large golden crown with three small diamond chips at the base. It is joined to the



Above: 3rd class, Reverse.
Below: 4th class officers.



Continued on page 6....

1915 Seda Currency

During the turbulent days of World War I, Lithuania was bombarded with a variety of "money," or pseudo-currencies. Each of these "symbols of payment" effectively robbed the Lithuanian public.

As mentioned in our feature on the Panevėžys Bolshevik notes, soldiers and officials began to extract goods from the populace as soon as their armies invaded. The German army was no exception.

The money shortage resulting from the war-time economy in Lithuania proved a hindrance to some German army officials, who found themselves dealing with a potpourri of paper in Lithuania. The German military commander in the small town of Seda (German: Siady) took matters into his own hands and issued his own local currency. Seda is in NW Lithuania, 26 km SW of Mažeikiai.

Notes were issued in denominations of 3, 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, and 50 kopecks, all dated November 2, 1915. This was during the early days of occupation, as Lithuania fell to Germany in September, 1915. Approximately 96 x 73 mm. in size, the notes were printed on paper supplied by the Hoesch brothers in Kreuzau, and contain a six-corner wickerwork watermark. The printer is unknown.

OBVERSE: The notes are uniface, with a simple text, consisting of three lines. The top line reads in bold print: "Gut fur 25 (funfunzwanzig) Kop," meaning "Good for 25 Kopecks." The second line, which appears below to the right, reads, "Siady, den 2, November 1915." Below that appears "Der Kreisamtmann," meaning "Military Commander." A simple rectangular ornamentation surrounds the text.

To the left is an open space, in which is hand-stamped the official seal of the commander. There are two types known. In the center of both is the German eagle, with "Kreises Siady" on the bottom. The first type bears the top legend, "Kreisamtmann," and the second type, "Kreishauptmann." Those bearing the second type are much rarer. Platbarzdis lists only the 5, 20, and 25 kopeck as having a type 2, but it is now known it exists in other denominations. It is theorized that a new seal was used for a short period of time before the circulation of the notes was discontinued.

The Seda notes are RARE, and we know of none which have appeared on the market. They were a short-time issue used in a small Lithuanian town of 1,300 persons, and were not valued by the populace. This author knows only one collector who owns any of these, in Europe. We have heard that there are color differences in the ink with the two types, but until we have the opportunity to examine these notes, we cannot verify that information. Do any of our LNA members have any of the Seda notes in their collection? If so, please send us a nice picture or photocopy, and inform



us as to the color of the printing, the color of the stamped seal, and if possible, the original price paid, and year purchased. A private sale in 1980 brought \$250 for a 20 k. note, Type I.

Currently, the German occupation notes for Seda, Lithuania, are not listed in the major numismatic publications. They are mentioned however, by Aleksandrs Platbarzdis in his books, and by Dr. Arnold Keller.

An article entitled, "Story Behind Tilsit's Bank Notes," by Frank Passic, appeared in the June 8, 1982 issue of World Coin News, p. 26.

Similar to that which first appeared here in The Knight August-September 1980, the article dealt with the Tilsit 1921 1 mark note, which features a map of the Lithuanian/Memel region. Pictured was Juozas Zikaras' carving, "The Book Smuggler," which depicts a man with a sack of Lithuanian books on his back, smuggling them into Lithuania from Tilsit, during the time when the Russian Czar outlawed the Lithuanian language. For a copy of the article, write: World Coin News, Krause Publications, Iola, Wisconsin 54945.

The April 28, 1982 issue of Coin World mentioned in a "filler" article, page 43, of the article on the Petras Rimša Ecclesiastical Pope's medal, which appeared in the March-April issue of the Balzėkas Museum Review. This produced a letter written to the museum asking how much the museum was selling these for! Rimša medals are scarce, and the museum is fortunate to even have one in their collection! To even think of selling one is absurd...

Still another protest letter appeared in WCN July 13, 1982 issue, and we bet they've gotten alot more, too! Write Chester Krause and let him know your feelings. It was wrong for them to list Lithuanian coins under "USSR."

4 Finances of Lithuania

We conclude the chapter entitled "The Finances of Lithuania" from the book, The Economic Reconstruction of Lithuania After 1918 by Anicetas Simutis (Columbia University Press, 1942).

In the group of debts for reconstruction the greatest item is the Match Monopoly Loan of \$4,500,000, which was contracted in 1930 in Sweden for the transfer of the match monopoly to the Swedish Match Manufacturing Company.

TABLE 49

FOREIGN AND DOMESTIC DEBTS OF LITHUANIA AT THE END OF 1939

A. FOREIGN DEBTS	LITAS
Debts to the U.S.A.	38,661,000 ^a
Debts to Great Britain	718,200 ^b
Liberty Loan	2,939,700
Match Monopoly Loan	25,193,500 ^c
Debts for public works	359,500
Short-term loans	1,043,400
TOTAL	68,915,300
B. DOMESTIC DEBTS	
4½% Domestic Loan of 1935	12,260,400
4½% Domestic Loan of 1936	11,893,600
Treasury Bills of 1937	2,138,300
4½% Domestic Loan of 1939	4,439,000
Vilnius Loan of 1939	15,420,500
Debentures of war collections	16,400
Debts for public works	4,063,000
TOTAL	65,231,200
TOTAL PUBLIC DEBT	134,146,500

^a Total debts to the United States: 41,600,700 litas or \$6,864,801.

^b Total debts to Great Britain: 1,456,700 litas or £50,849.

^c \$4,157,350.

Appendix F

FOREIGN EXCHANGE QUOTATIONS IN KAUNAS

DATE	NEW YORK	LONDON	BERLIN	PARIS	RIGA
	Litas to \$1.00	Litas to £1	Litas to 100 Rm.	Litas to 100 Frs.	Litas to 100 Lats
Jan., 1928	10.06	49.00	240.00	39.41	194.45
Jan., 1929	10.07	48.80	239.69	39.53	194.00
Jan., 1930	10.00	48.74	238.90	39.34	193.07
Jan., 1931	10.01	48.60	238.11	39.27	192.80
Jan., 1932	10.02	35.16	238.91	39.51	189.00
Jan., 1933	10.04	33.74	238.54	39.25	
Jan., 1934	6.42	32.20	240.22	39.65	
Jan., 1935	5.99	29.24	240.00	39.37	
Jan., 1936	5.93	29.39	239.34	39.29	193.48
Jan., 1937	5.95	29.14	238.20	27.72	114.91
Jan., 1938	5.93	29.66	238.20	19.87	117.20
Jan., 1939	5.95	27.82	238.20	15.72	110.11
Oct., 1939	6.01	24.11	238.20	13.68	112.54

NOTE: The litas, the monetary unit of Lithuania, equals 100 centas and contains 0.150463 grams of fine gold. Its circulation in Lithuania was abolished by the Soviet government after the occupation in 1940.

Jonas Masiulis

In the last issue of The Knight, we gave a brief biography of Bank of Lithuania board member Ignas Musteikis. We have obtained information on bank board member Jonas Masiulis, the information supplied to us by LNA member Charles Matuzas.

Jonas Masiulis was born in the interior of Russia in 1870, where his parents were exiled by the Czar for their participation in the 1863 uprising. When the son grew up, his father sent him to Lithuania so as not to lose his Lithuanian roots.

In Lithuania, Masiulis studied agriculture and graduated as an agronomist. Later living in Vilnius, he financially financed diverse Lithuanian cultural and social activities.



Photo above from "Lietuvos Bankas 1922-1932"

He was one of the founders of that once very active group, "Rūta." He was also a member of the prestigious Lithuanian Scientific Society during the period 1907-09. In 1910, with professor Jodelė, he organized a cement factory with his contribution of 10,000 rubles. In 1919 he was elected a committee member in the Kaunas City Council. Later he was elected into the National Assembly, but in 1920 he resigned. He also helped organize the big government import/export business, "MAISTAS," and meat and meat product canneries. He was a prolific writer on agriculture. During the 1930's he was a member of the Bank of Lithuania.

In 1940 when the Russians occupied Lithuania, he was forced to resign from all of his agricultural activities. Thereupon he left for his 176 hectares cultural farm near the town of Kamajai in the district of Rokiškis. There in May of 1941 he was sentenced by the Kamajai "people's court" to 10 years imprisonment for allegedly "sabotaging". Up until May 30 he was held in the prison in Panevėžys, but by June 3, 1941, it became clear to his close ones that he had been murdered. His belongings were returned.

The signature of Jonas Masiulis appears on the P-27 July 5, 1930 20 Litų banknote.

We uncovered a black & white negative, and when we had it developed, look what it turned out to be! Pictured on the right is a proposed medal design by sculptor Vytautas Kašuba. You may recall that it was Kašuba who designed the silver proof 1968 Medal of King Mindaugas, and the 1979 Vilnius University 400th anniversary medal.



Above: 1968 King Mindaugas Medal

On the far left is the reverse of the proposed medal, centering around the seal of Vytautas, with the Latin text, and Gothic script. The English text reads, "50th Anniversary of Declaration of Restoration 1918-1968, 1251 LITHUANIA Kindgom 1795." The notation below the medal states that the English text was the same as in earlier issues. This refers to the 1968 Mindaugas medal.

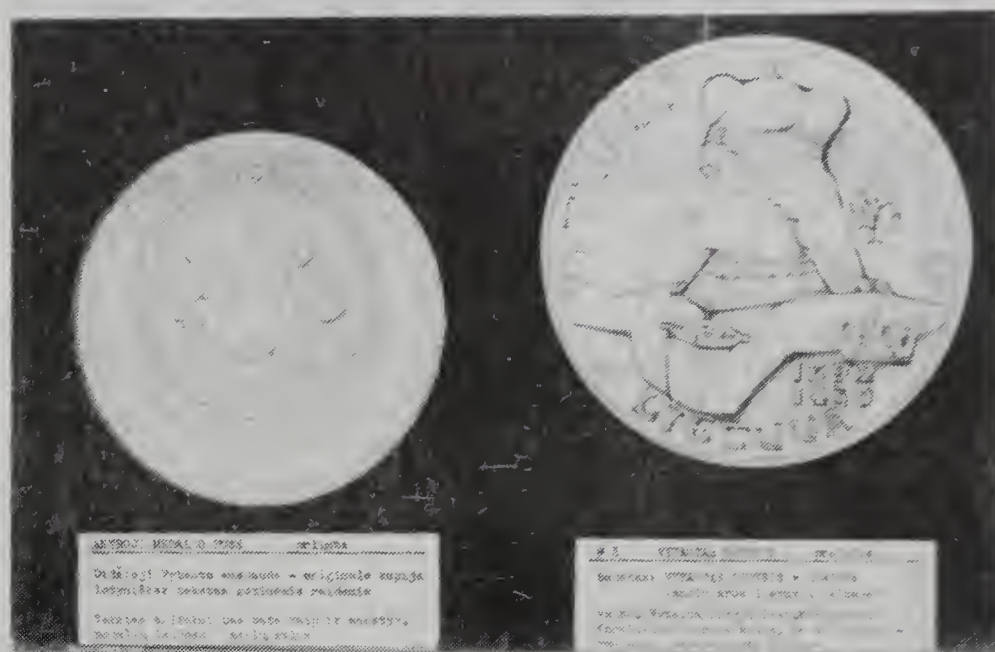
On the right is the proposed obverse, featuring a bust of Vytautas the Great, with the royal crown alongside. This design was apparently made by Kašuba in 1972. We have not heard of any being actually struck.

Regarding Vytautas' crown, those familiar with Lithuanian history will recall the unfortunate circumstances which prevented the actual crowning ceremony from taking place; this was due to Polish interference in Lithuanian affairs, of course. The Encyclopedia Lituanica, Vol. VI (1978), pp. 217-218 records the details:

The coronation of Vytautas impeded. After the assassination of King Mindaugas in 1263, the subsequent rulers of Lithuania, because they did not accept Christianity, were not crowned as kings, coronation then being a custom of Christian monarchs (see Coronation). When Jogaila was baptized in Cracow and was crowned king of Poland, he became an impediment to any desire on the part of Vytautas to gain the royal crown which Mindaugas had had. The nobles of Poland adhered to the view, contrary to the practice of western Europe, that two kingdoms could not be united. Vytautas need not have paid attention to this, had he not required the friendship and support of Jogaila in order to expand the territory of the Lithuanian state and overcome the Teutonic Order. Before the battle of Tannenberg (1410) Emperor Sigismund of

Luxemburg had offered Vytautas the royal crown; he hoped in this way to destroy the alliance of Lithuania and Poland. Vytautas resisted this temptation. The question of crowning Vytautas arose a second time at the conference of Lutsk (q.v.) in 1429, which was summoned on the initiative of Emperor Sigismund to decide the eastern problems. The visit of the Emperor to the state of Lithuania was a display of honor to its ruler Vytautas, who was then at the height of his power and fame.

From the surviving sources it is not possible to determine whether the question of the coronation of Vytautas had been planned in advance or only arose in the course of the conference. Emperor Sigismund asked King Jogaila whether he consented that his cousin Vytautas should be crowned as a king. Jogaila agreed. Perhaps he had in mind the two sons who had been born to him in his old age; one of them could become king of Poland and the other could become king of Lithuania. The proposal to crown Vytautas was opposed by a group of the king's advisers, led by Bishop Zbigniew Oleśnicki. They left the conference of Lutsk, before it came to an end, taking their King with them. Jogaila was compelled to cancel the consent he had given the Emperor. In the written communication he explained that the coronation of Vytautas would be contrary to the treaties of union between Lithuania and Poland, that Lithuania was the hereditary possession of the king of Poland, and that Vytautas was only ruling it for the duration of his life; but if Vytautas was crowned king, then after his death the nobles of Lithuania could elect a king without even consulting the Poles and thus Lithuania could become separated entirely from Poland. In a long letter of Feb. 17, 1429 to Jogaila, Vytautas replied that the acts of union did not restrict him and that as Grand Prince



he had free and secure rule over Lithuania; if he chose to be crowned, the king's advisers would not be able to prevent him. This was the beginning of an intense diplomatic conflict which lasted a whole year and spread far beyond the borders of Lithuania and Poland.

The Roman Emperor, Sigismund of Luxemburg, having promised to send them royal crowns, took the side of Vytautas and his wife Juliana. Pope Martin V, the head of the Roman Church, inclined to support the cause of Poland. He was anxious lest discord between Lithuanians and Poles might hinder a crusade against the Hussites. In his letters the Pope recognized that Vytautas had earned and merited a royal crown but asked him to give up the projected coronation; bishops of neighboring countries were warned not to take part in the ceremony. Jurists of the University of Vienna, brought in by the Emperor, declared that the Roman Emperor, being superior to other rulers, had the right to grant the crowns; they said that there were kings crowned without papal consent and that the religious ceremonies were not indispensable. In Rome the Emperor defended Vytautas' decision for coronation and argued that it did not destroy the alliance of Lithuania and Poland or harm the general good of Christianity.

The day planned for the coronation of Vytautas was Sept. 8, 1430, the feast of the Nativity of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The Poles reinforced the guards on their western border to prevent the Emperor's men from traveling to Lithuania. The first part of the delegation, which was on its way with letters and documents, was stopped by the Poles, beaten and driven away into the territory of Prussia. The second part, which was bringing the crown, learned what had happened and returned to Germany. The ceremony was postponed and it was decided to forge a crown in Vil-

Order of Vytautas...

ribbon by a gold straight bar suspension clasp, through which passes a 33 mm. ribbon of white moire, with a 4 mm. orange stripe towards each end. The suspension bar has an ornament in the center: an inverted double-barred cross.

Pensions and allowances at 60 years of age entitled recipients to the following monetary stipends: 4th class: 10 pensions of 200 litas'; 5th class: 25 pensions of 150 Litas'. To the orphans and children of recipients: stipends in high school and colleges were given. In special cases of illness or other misfortune, recipients could obtain a one time monetary allowance.

The Order of Vytautas the Great came in 5 classes, the highest being a special gold grand collar held by the President of the Republic, Antanas Smetona. The gold grand collar bore a large cross of the Order, hanging from a golden neck chain made of alternating crowned letter "V's" and Vytis (Knight) links. This is the most beautiful of Lithuanian decorations. Unfortunately, it was lost during the chaos of the 1940 military occupation of the nation. The portrait of the President accompanying this article (next page), shows him wearing the gold grand collar of the Order.

The Order of Vytautas the Great followed the custom of European orders, and was issued in 5 classes: the Knight 5th class is worn on the left breasts. The Officer 4th class is identical, except that it has the addition of a rosette on the ribbon. The Commander 3rd class features a badge slightly larger and is worn around the neck. The Grand Officer 2nd class is again larger, and also is worn around the neck. ~~This has the addition of an 8-~~

(Continued on next page....)

THE FOLLOWING CHART BELOW SETS FORTH THE VARIOUS GRADE RANKS TO WHICH THE PARTICULAR CLASSES OF THE ORDER WAS AWARDED:



Certificate translation: "Republic of Lithuania. Order of Vytautas the Great. Republic of Lithuania Presidential Act, Colonel Petrys Genys, For Merit, Lithuania presents the Order of Vytautas the Great. Bishop (4th class) Honor Badge. Signed, Order Chancellor, Signed, Order affairs Manager. Act of the Republic of Lithuania, made Kaunas, September 8, 1933. No. 831/96.

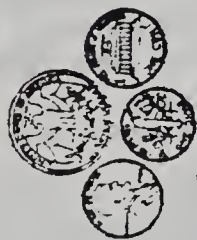
Order/Grade	Military	Civilian	Government
5. Knight 5th	1st and 2nd Lieutenant	VII, IX, X, 1st Graduate of school.	IV, V, and VI
4. Officer 4th	Captain and Major	XI and XII	VII and VIII
3. Commander 3rd	Lt. Colonel and Colonel	XIII, XIV, and XV	IX, X, and XI
2. Grand Officer 2nd	Brigadier General & Division General	XVI, XVII, and XVIII	XII, XIII, XIV, and XV
1. Grand Cordon 1st	All categories: According to the desires of the Council of Ministers with the approval of the President of the Republic. [Note: Each citizen, whether military, civilian, or in government service, had a rank category. As the chart above shows, what rank you were determined your eligibility for a particular grade of the Order.]		

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6.	G602	1/2 Grosz	Sig August	1562	VF	29.50
7.	G602	Groschen	Sig August	1562	VF/XF	44.00
8.	G610	Groschen	Sig August	1567	F+	148.50
9.	G622	3 Grosz	Sig August (Scarce)	1563	F/YF	99.00
10.	G752	3 Grosz	Stefan Bathory (Rare)	1580	VF/XF	125.00
11.	G755	3 Grosz	Stefan Bathory	1581	VG/F	29.50
12.	G756	3 Grosz	Stefan Bathory	1582	F	36.00
13.	G1282	2Denare	Sig III	162?	F	14.50
14.	G1324	Groschen	Sig III	1626	VG/F	19.50
15.	G1330	3 Grosz	Sig III	1590	VF+	42.50
16.	G1862	Schilling	Jon Kasimir (Rare) (Adj)	1652	VF+	95.00

Order of Vytautas the Great.....

pointed golden breast star with the obverse of the badge superimposed in the center. The Grand Cordon or 1st class is worn from a wide sash ribbon over the right shoulder with a still larger badge hanging from a bow on the left hip. The sash ribbon is identical white moire with orange stripes towards each end. The breast star is also worn on the left breast. Recipients of the Grand Cordon frequently wore the badge from the neck, when in less than full honors situations.

The establishment of the Order of Vytautas the Great as the highest decoration in Lithuania necessitated a re-alignment of its existing orders. The Cross of Vytis, previously the highest decoration, was dropped to second place, but elevated with the raising of the decoration to an Order status. The Order of the Cross of Vytis will appear in a subsequent issue. The Order of Vytautas the great is a very rare order as it was seldom awarded, and was issued for only 10 years. The Medal of the Order of Vytautas the Great will be featured in the next issue of The Knight.

LETTERS

7

I particularly am enjoying the translation of Karys' 1959 book. Keep up the good work. As perhaps one of very few non-Lithuanians of your society, I can assure you I feel exactly as you do about putting Lithuania back under the "l's" in the Krause catalog. I realize the need for geographical listings as well, but there are simply some countries where the overwhelming reasonableness is to keep them listed alphabetically. Thanks again for sharing a wonderful year of valuable information on a very special country to me.

----Russell Hibbs., Henderson, KY

Please cool it on Religion.

----William S. Archur, PaloAlto, CA

I would like to see articles written by members.

----Ginger Rapsus, Oak Lawn, ILL.

[Editor's note: So would I. We have one coming up in the next issue]

I have followed the cataloging controversy with much interest, in that I only live 12 miles from Iola, know Chet Krause, and also get to meet and talk with his staff at WCN, and those who make up the SCWC. For the most part they think our cause is more or less a joke. They have shown me many of the letters written in protest, and always their comments were unfavorable. I made my meager protests in person, but to no avail. When I bring the subject up while in their offices, they only show me letters from our LNA club members, make some rather crude jokes about them and then let it drop. I have known Chet for 29 years and also know Cliff, and in the future I will try and bend the ears of both of them and see if I can get some word from one of them, as to their position on this matter. But from past experiences, it all seems to be falling on deaf ears.

----Paul Vaičulaitis, Waupaca, WI.

I read Mr. Krause's letter [The Knight #24] more than 3 times to ascertain the logic of it. I failed. What I find irritating are the false analogies and off-the-mark generalities Mr. Krause uses to defend his "geographic" listings and, enpassant, to save the "face" of the editor [i.e. Colon Bruce II]. It is not easy for a Pooh-Bah to admit a boo-boo. Is it true that Afghanistan will be listed under Russia in the next SCWC? Or will Krause Publications wait for word from the Russian government?

---Claus Kassel, Goldfield, NV.



BALTIC SAGA COINS. A series of beautiful medals, 40 mm in diameter and weighing approximately 30 grams each, recreating crucial moments in Baltic history. Each side is visually appealing. Inscriptions for each coin read as follows:

COIN #1: "Coats of arms of independent Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania." LT-101 P — Platinum; LT-111 P — 22K Gold; LT-121 P — 99.9% Silver.

COIN #2: "The evil Pact of Hitler and Stalin led to the occupation and destruction of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania in 1940. Their independence and freedom must be restored again." LT-102 P — Platinum; LT-112 P — 22K Gold; LT-122 P — 99.9% Silver.

COIN #3: "One night in the history of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Mass deportations of June 13/14, 1941." LT-103 P — Platinum; LT-113 P — 22K Gold; LT-123 P — 99.9% Silver.

COIN #4: "Armed resistance by Estonian, Latvian and Lithuanian freedom fighters 1940-1952." LT-104 P — Platinum; LT-114 P — 22K Gold; LT-124 P — 99.9% Silver.

COIN #5: "The Human Rights Declaration of the United Nations for all peoples. Estonians, Latvians, and Lithuanians also have a right to their land, language and independence." LT-105 P — Platinum; LT-115 P — 22K Gold; LT-125 P — 99.9% Silver.

COIN #6: "The deadly comb ran back and forth, and back again, through Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. There was no doubt, however, where the right lay. The Baltic States should be sovereign independent peoples." Winston Churchill, 1950. LT-106 P — Platinum; LT-116 P — 22K Gold; LT-126 — 99.9% Silver.

COIN #7: "30 years of exile 1944-1974. For 30 years now one tenth of all Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians have been in exile. Their lands are still occupied and ruled by the cruel and imperialistic colonial power of today." LT-107 P — Platinum; LT-117 P — 22K Gold; LT-127 — 99.9% Silver.

COIN #8: "Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis, Lithuanian Artist and Composer." LT-108 P — Platinum; LT-118 P — 22K Gold; LT-128 P — 99.9% Silver.

Each coin is sealed in plastic and comes with a card explaining its significance and care.

Back in 1974-75, a series of medals were issued in gold, silver, and platinum, and struck by the Franklin Mint. Entitled "Baltic Saga Coins" this series deals with the fate of the Republics of Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania. The final medal honors the Lithuanian composer Mikalojus Kostantinas Čiurlionis.

Illustrated on the left is the entire set as pictured in the color "Lithuanian Heritage" catalog of Baltic Associates, P.O. Box 8248, Boston, MA 02114. At the issuance of their 1981 catalog supplement last year, they stated that they had discontinued selling these.

LNA members: We would like to individually feature these in future issues of The Knight. We would like to know: the designer, sponsor/organization which undertook the project, etc. Also, are any still for sale anywhere? Did any of our LNA members order these when they were originally issued? We would like to obtain a set of nice photographs of these medals. Write us if you know anything about these.

Archives...

nius. A Polish delegation with King Jogaila came to Vytautas on Oct. 9, 1430. After explanations and negotiations which lasted a week, the cousins agreed that after the death of Vytautas the royal crown of Lithuania should pass to one of Jogaila's sons. However, Vytautas did not live long enough to be crowned; he died at Trakai on Oct. 27, 1430 and was buried in the Cathedral of Vilnius.

For many years the alleged crown was at the Polish museum in Cracow, but it was melted by the Germans during their occupation of that country in WWI.

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about 39 years and issued many coins of all types. In addition to silver coins, another mint operated in Vilnius, which struck more gold coins for Vasa than for both his predecessors together.

We must emphasize that silver coins (those completed earlier as well as those newly designed) during the reign of S. Vasa deteriorated from the instructions governing Batoras' procedures considerably, and continued on the downgrade. It is also evident that with the change in moneyers [minters] at the Vilnius mint, the technical aspect of Lithuania's silver coins reached a lower level. Vasa's healthy desires (as exemplified in the edict of the Crown of 1616 to stabilize its country's economic condition, in which monetary concerns were joined) clashed into the rooted mismanagement without any expected response. Only the gold coins retained their accustomed quality, superintended as they were by specially selected trustees. In the ducat there was always 3.5 g, 23.5 carat gold, and its value at the start of Vasa's reign, was set at 58 grašiai. The same official rate was accorded to foreign ducats, which appeared in circulation more than our own.

The silver coin mint in Vilnius of Sigismund III (Vasa) renewed its operations in 1589, about 3 years after the death of Batoras. At first it resorted to Batoras' introduced shillings, and the old 3-grašiai, after changing to the appropriate portraits, legends and crests. Later followed the 2-denars, the grašis, the 1 1/2 grašis (known as "paltarokas" in Polish, "poltorak"). There were no larger silver pieces (at least, none has yet been found). [See note on page 325.]



Figure 102. Sigismund III Lithuanian 2-Denars

The 2-denar coins (called dvylekis) as produced were very similar to those of Sigismund Augustus' coins of that same denomination. The photos show a change in the monogram

monogram from SA to the single "S" (Sigismund). After a year, it was augmented by a family crest of the Vasa's---a small sheaf. The figure II (two) through a series of issues changed from one side to the other of the coin. The Polish eagle is missing. This establishes the said 2-denar as the most Lithuanian of all post-Lublin coins. It is difficult to determine who made that gracious gesture to Lithuanians: whether it was the new ruler himself, or influential officials of the Vilnius mint. It suffices that such a coin appeared, and to the great displeasure of the Poles, continued to be struck at the Vilnius mint for a long series of years.

However, in its makeup and par value, this 2-denar was not the equivalent of its famous predecessor: the statistics on hand show that the early 2-denars of S. Vasa separately weighed somewhat more than S. Augustus' similar coins, but the silver content was reduced about 50%. In the end, Vasa's 2-denars were debased even more.

Not all of these 2-denars have been recovered. Production of them was begun in Vilnius in 1606, and the issue of 1626 is considered to be the final issue, but in that 20 year period span the dates of 1608, 1615-18, 1624-5 in the findings and the 1610 2-denar piece (See Fig. 103/7) are suspect. Gartman mentions one of these 2-denars under the date of 1600²⁸, but this date is too early for Vasa's 2-denar. It appears that the author availed himself of one of the earlier erroneous line-drawings, in which the said date was created out of a real "1509." Such a drawing can be found in numismatic literature.

In the earlier 2-denar pieces (to 1614 exclusively) on one side or the other we see a mark---the heads of two arrows joined together, and sometimes, the letter "H", which belongs to the Treasurer Jerome (Hieronim) Valavičius, while two upright "fishes" belong to Christopher Naruševičius. The placing of marks of lower officials of the mint (leasees, minters, engravers) upon coins was forbidden from 1598 on. In their place were initials of the city in which the mint operated (W or V. both these letters would signify "Vilnius"). As always, however, even in this aspect there was no uniformity. On some of Sigismund III coins the initial "V" appears, on others, it does not, while on large coins we again see the marks of mint officials lower than the Treasurer.

* * *

²⁸"Polsk. i litovsk. star. monety," page 67.

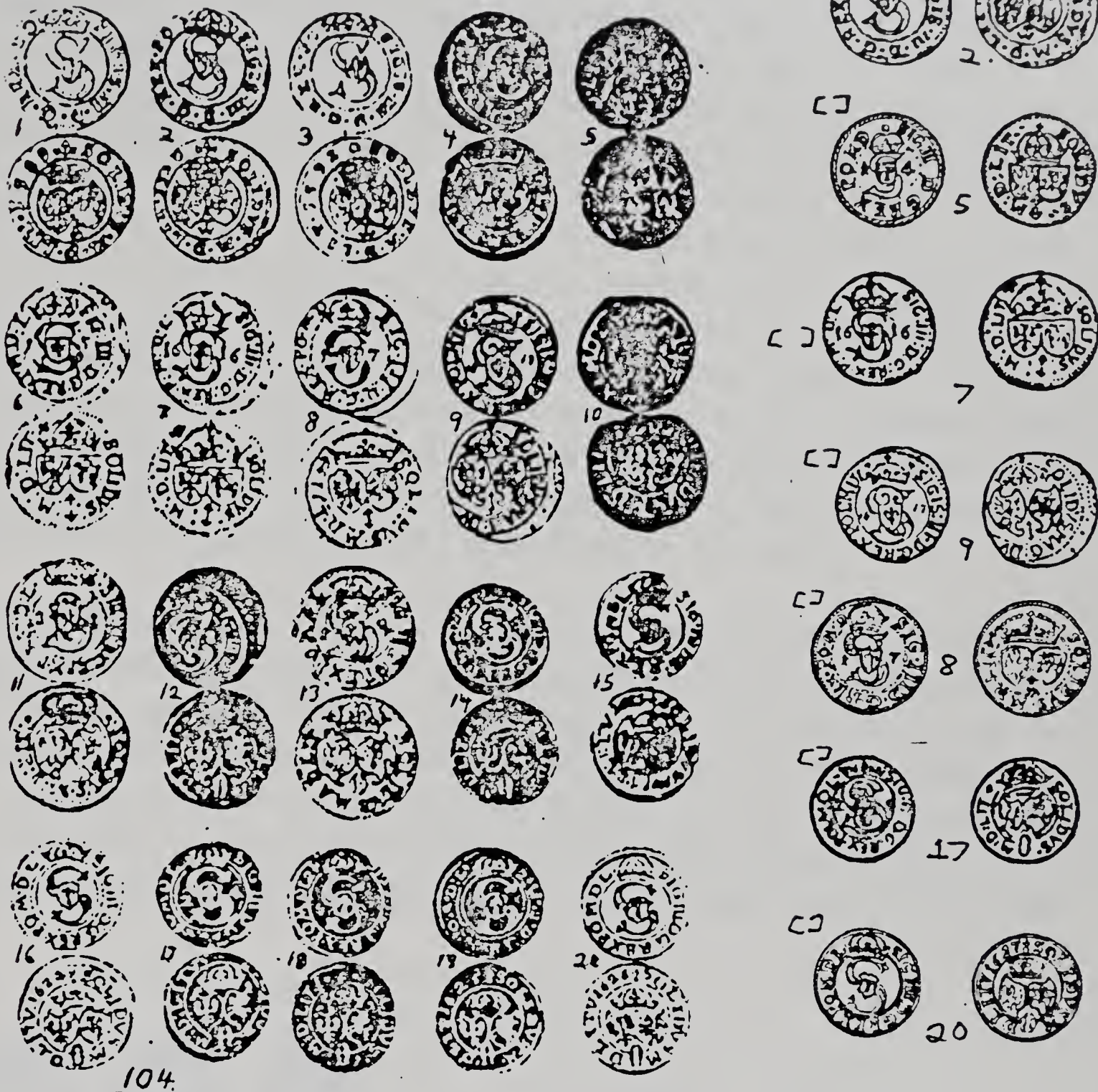


Figure 104. The Shillings of the Lithuanian Grand Duchy during the Reign of Sigismund Vasa.

There were a great many shillings struck during Vasa's reign, and their variety actually astounds us. Just look at their illustrations. There we will see not only many changes in the inscriptions, but even differences in the placements of the crests, variances in the "face" of the coins, and a variety of diameters. Our information indicates that shillings were struck in Vilnius on two occasions: the first time 1589-1592, the second--1612-1627. Occasional undated shillings recovered could be prepared for other years, but we have no way to establish in which years. Poorly struck coins (for example, Figure 104/4, 5, 10, 12) could be genuine, or could be counterfeited and deliberately aged by the falsifiers. Is it possible that at the turn of the 16th and 17th centuries, the mint would have issued into circulation such loathsomely struck coins, when it was feasible to strike then not only correctly, but even, in comparison to others, rather nicely? If those imperfect shillings are genuine, then they came into the hands of students not from recoveries of circulated coins, but most likely from the melt heap, i.e., from coin errors at the mint which, in those corrupt days, could have been illegally abstracted from the compound.

During the first period, Lithuanian shillings were similar in all respects to those of Batoras' Vilnius shillings. Their average weight was about 1.120 gr., and their silver content about 0.180. Later, various changees begin, the weight decreases, and even the poor silver content mixed in the metal dips further. From this we may understand why merchants, and in general the public, disliked these coins. It was clear to everyone that three of the later S. Vasa's shillings did not equal the grašis, as they did in the time of Batoras, or even as did three shillings at the very beginning of Vasa's reign.



Figure 105. The Unusual post-Lublin Sisismund III Shillings Struck in Vilnius during 1623-24.

During the service of Naruševičius as Treasurer, the Vilnius mint issued several series of Sigismund III shillings of an entirely different type: on the obverse was The Knight, and the Eagle on the reverse (See Figure 105). These shillings in their outward appearance recall certain pre-Lublin Lithuanian coins. Regretfully, in their composition they rate very low, and actually do not deserve the sobriquet of "silver" since their content reaches only to 0.155.

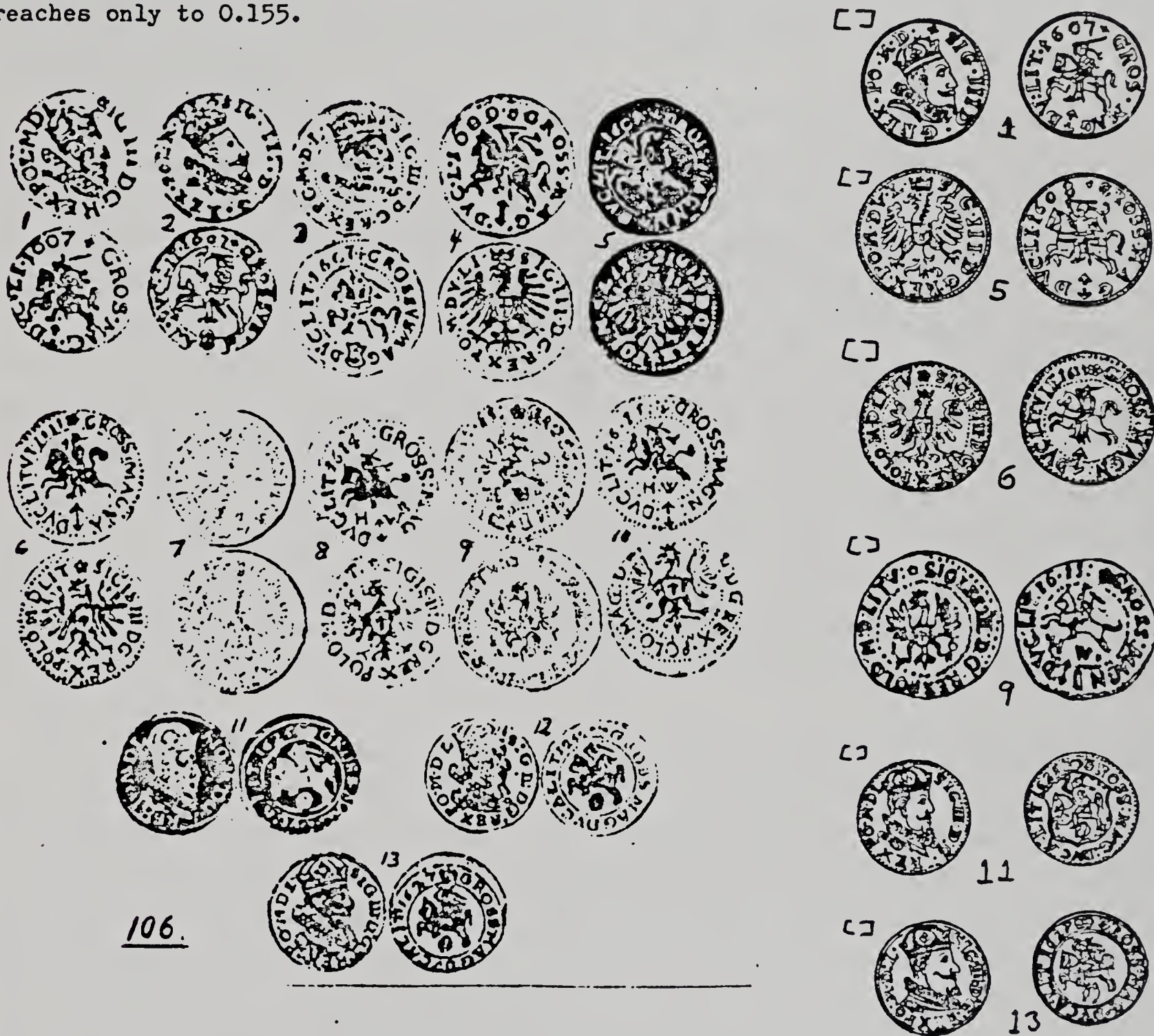


Figure 106. The Lithuanian Grašis of Sigismund III (Vasa)

The first of these coins, issued from the Vilnius mint in 1607, clearly violate the spirit of the act of Union and the practice during Batoras' reign of depicting the crests of both countries: the Polish crest is omitted. Apparently, the Treasurer of Lithuania, Jerome Valavičius, determined to test how the Royal Palace at Cracow would react to similar deviations from practice. The fundamental coin of the Lithuanian Grand Duchy--the grašis---was again purely Lithuanian. On the obverse was the ruler's visage, on the other--the crest of the Grand Duchy, the Knight (Vytis). Just as it was before the date and Act of Lublin!!

Regretfully, such a Lithuanian grašis did not last long. In the following year, the Polish eagle appeared in place of the king's own portrait. On another occasion an attempt was made to strike Lithuanian grašis without the Polish crest, in 1625-27 (during the administration of Treasurer K. Naruševičius), but they exhibit more the profanation of the coins of the Grand duchy in the field of value, and bring honor to no one.

In 1607-1615, the grašis legally weighed over 1.555 gr. There should have been 0.560 gr. of silver in each. So, even disregarding the pre-Lublin Lithuanian grašis, the Vasa grašis evolved even poorer than those of Batoras. They deteriorated with time. Then suddenly Polish coins flooded Lithuania, even much "leaner." Nominally valued at 1.5 grašis, speculators began to buy up older and even the new Lithuanian grašis for them in 1614, selling them at a substantial profit for the one-and-a-half grosh coins struck at the Bydgość (Poland) mint. This search for grašis was quickly noticed, and authorities understood that their striking was unreasonable, so the issuance of grašis by the Vilnius mint was stopped, thus putting pressure on the production of the inferior shillings, which no one sought, nor in fact, wanted.

The second issue of Vasa's grašis struck in Vilnius (See Figure 106/11-13) weighed only about 1 gr. and it contained about 50% less silver than the previous issue. It seems they were consonant not with one or another type of grašis, but with the prevailing 1.5 grašis coins of Poland and Lithuania, though even here the proper metallic proportion was not followed; The newest grašis in reality even here had fallen. Many queer incidents occurred in the ill-fated Polish-Lithuanian state, but the most obvious were the irregularities in the monetary field. The constant deterioration of coins, as the rule goes, regularly drove from circulation the earlier and better coins, destroyed the price level of the country's economy, upset confidence in the money system for the economic future, and stifled the public's cultural initiative. The king and his counselors either did not discern these destructive tendencies, or after the Lublin Union, fate generated such a downhill course that no one among the responsible governmental authorities cared for

anything else excepting himself. It is shameful to repeat it, but it is necessary: "mismanagement controls the Republic." This motto was a leading theme formulated in the joint state, ruled by "one king" behind whose back unbridled magnates, prelates, boyars acted, factually created and maintained that mismanagement...

Towards the end, Vasa's grašis descended to such a level that not even for two of them was it possible to purchase one Lithuanian grašis of the pre-Lublin issue. The superintendent of the Vilnius coin mint, Jakobson, hailed by the ruler himself as "most conscientious" confirmed in this cozy seat in 1623, through the next five years brought the coins of the Grand Duchy to ruin. The shillings and grašs of his term were only apparently silver in their outward form. To what extent the Vilnius grašis was debased we can visualize from its relationship in exchange for the taler, and in a very short space of time: at the beginning of S. III Vasa's reign, 35 grašis were paid for the taler. In 1598, the government fixed it at 36; in 1601, the price of the large silver coins jumped up to 38; after seven years, it was 40; in 1616--45. Another three years passing brought it to 75. Notwithstanding the government's repeated interference (in 1621-23) while the Congress had intervened even earlier), by 1626, the taler was bringing 90 grašis. Which is to say that over 30 years, the grašis had lost 2/3 of its value.

In debasing the grašis, we can observe the very officials of the mint similarly degrading themselves, since on the coins themselves other than changes in type, we find unforgiveable errors. For example instead of 1609, the date 1600 was inscribed. Elsewhere in place of 1610 we find 1601. On the issue of grašis of 1626, the date came out as "1262" (See figure 106/12). Near the personal mark of Treasurer Valavičius (See Figure 106, 8 & 10) there was struck the letter "H" which seemed to suffice (on the 2-denars) earlier, but there was added a "W," which hinders students from pronouncing with authority whether it represents the Valavičius (in Polish--Wollowicz) surname, or the locale of the Mint, Wilnius (in Polish--Vilno). In those days, these errors gave very little trouble, but after several centuries they developed into large hurdles, presenting substantial difficulties to numismatists of less experience.

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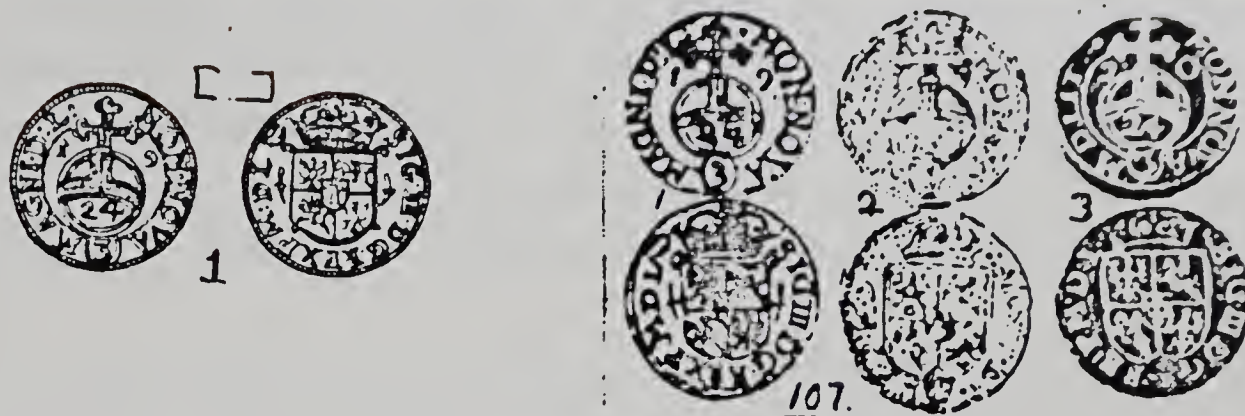


Figure 107. The First Issue of the Grand Duchy's 1.5 Grašis Nominal Value ("paltarokas").

These coins, known from the Polish "poltorok," and called "paltarokas" in Lithuanian, and occasionally "2-denars" were struck in Vilnius only in 1619-1620. As a matter of fact, they were unnecessary even in those years, since such coins, prevalent in Poland from 1614, had already flooded Lithuania, and the people had already grown accustomed to them. However, in the spirit of the Lublin agreements, seeking "equality" in both countries--any coins that appeared in Poland, similar coins should circulate in Lithuania...But, as always happened, critical errors were not avoided: the 1.5 grašis coin, of that nominal value produced by the Vilnius mint was designed and issued with the weight and pure silver content of S. Vasa's latter coins (accordingly, 1.545 and 0.725 gr) while the Polish "poltoraki" flooding Lithuania (the 1.5 grosh coins) had already dropped to 0.49 gr. of pure silver in each. In these circumstances, the new Lithuanian coins could not compete, their production was a misfortune, and so soon after their striking began in the following year, they were discontinued at Vilnius.

On the obverse side of the Vilnius 1.5 Grašis coin, which differed only slightly from the Polish coins of the same denomination, we see a cross superimposed upon a globe, and three figures, which represent: at the top, on both sides of the cross, 1 and 9 or 2 and 0 --the date the coins were struck "1619 and "1620." In the bottom of the globe "24"--the fact that this coin represented 1/24 part of the taler (the same taler which was officially designated in 1598 at worth 36 grašis, but now, unfortunately, advancing almost double...) . Still farther down the figure "3" representing that in the said coins were...3 half-grašiai (!?) The German (Stolberg) "Groeschel," which undoubtedly was the model for both

the Polish and our own "paltakorks" equalled 1/84 of a taler, as it did at the time of their striking in the 16th century. Perhaps the original Polish "poltorok" did represent one twenty-fourth of a taler of one kind or another, but in 1619-20, it was possible to buy a silver taler for not less than 50 Vilnius 1.5 grašis coins, so here again the nonsense was repeated, which we already have experienced and will experience again, since "mismanagement controls the Republic"...

On the reverse of the said coins there is nothing new. The field contains the doubled crests of Lithuania and Poland with the sheaf of Vasa in the center. Above--the mitre, around the inscription, "SIGISMUNDUS III D G REX POLONIAE MAGN DUX LITHUANIAE"(Abbreviated) and the mark of the mint's supervisor. This side, which Polish numismatists and other foreigners who are not sufficiently familiar with our past (and are objective about it) have designated it the obverse, the principal side.. We had to transpose this, since here the side with the denomination is more important, the figures represent three essential elements and the legend, "MONETA NOVA MAGNI DUCATUS LITUANIAE" distinguishes the coin from very similar types of coins from other countries--not only Poland but even neighboring Riga (which struck the same type of coin at about the same time).

Polish poltoroks, and among them some from Vilnius, in their time had reached even into the Ukraine. After the peace treaty of Andrusav (1667) a part of the Ukraine (the left side of the Dnieper river) fell to Moscow. For the longest time the Russians were unable to replace the poltoroks with their own coins. The inhabitants had already become accustomed to them, while coins of the new ruler were unknown to them. After 20 years of wasted effort , the Russian officials seized upon a small trick. In 1686-7, they emitted into circulation, strictly aimed at that territory (without the right to use elsewhere) silver coins, struck purely along the lines of Sigismund III paltarokas, changing only the Polish-Lithuanian crests for Russian ones, and similarly rearranging the names and titles of the rulers. And that these "novelties" would be even closer to the paltorakas, they were inscribed with Latin letters...

For some reason, the Ukrainians called these paltorakas "čechas." Since the paltorokas slipped in by the Russians had been produced in the town of Sievsk (County of Orlo), the new "čekas" were termed "Sievsko čechis" (sievski čech). But the rulers of Moscow were very sparing of silver. The projected replacements of the paltoroks were produced with such a low grade of metal that even a country bumpkin would notice them to be greatly inferior to Sigismund III's paltorokas. No one would take the "Sievsko čech" coins, and the public

vigorously opposed the government's efforts. In some localities serious disturbances arose, threateni to cause a general revolt against all authority. The government at Moscow yielded: in 1687 there was issued the Czar's order to withdraw the new "čechs" and to permit the older ones to remain in circulation.²⁹ It was only after a long time that they disappeared by degress, naturally dissipating with other coins in circulation, and by exchange. The "Sievsko čechs" that remained in the government's hands were re-struck into other Russian coins, as is understandable. There remained but a very few in the hands of the inhabitants. Today, they are a great rarity in numismatics.

* * *

The 3-grašis of Vasa were but a continuation of Batoras' 3-grašiai. According to Batoras' schedule of 1580, they were to weigh separately about 2.370 gr., and within that weight there should be about 2 gr. of pure silver. The first struck in Vilnius in 1589-1603 generally conformed to those specifications. But soon they began to deteriorate bib by bit, just as all other coins of that time. While the series of 3-grašiai repeated in 1608 began yet another composition of metal: we find in them only 1.850 gr. of silver. However, these 3-grašiai of Vasa were struck for one year, perhaps even less, and were his last. As silver advanced in price, their further production did not pay.

Through the 15 years, exclusive of 1608, the Vilnius mint struck a great number of 3-grašiai. Together with the Polish 3-grosh, they became an acceptable coin everywhere. They flooded not only Lithuania and Poland, but even neighboring states. Alongside the genuine, many counterfeit 3-grašiai appeared in circulation, which were hard to detect, since they weighed the same as the originals, the portraits--the same, except that the constitution of the metal was much poorer.

The Polish and Lithuanian mints had long used silver, purchased mostly in Germany and Austria. The purchasers and their agents always profited well, but during the latter days of the 3-grašiai, extremely well. Because payment was made in the purchaser's coins, the cheaper these coins were, the cheaper would be the purchased silver cost, (this includes the largest foreign coins). A series of publicized complaints, rising in Franconia, Saxony, Svabia, even on the Rhine and elsewhere, testify that at this time the people there clearly recognized the

²⁹For more of this historic episode, see P.V. Zubuv's "Materialy po russkoj numizmatike," page 2, and V. Šugajevski's "Iz zapisok numizmata," in the "Novoje Russk. Slovo," No. 14, 149, N.Y., 1951.

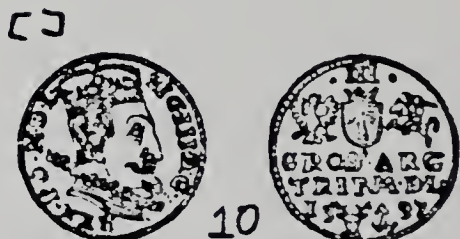
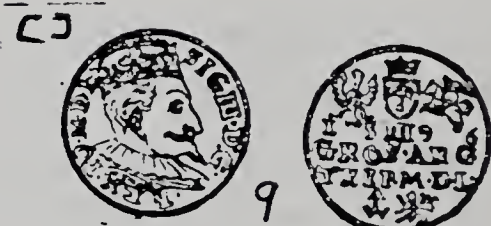
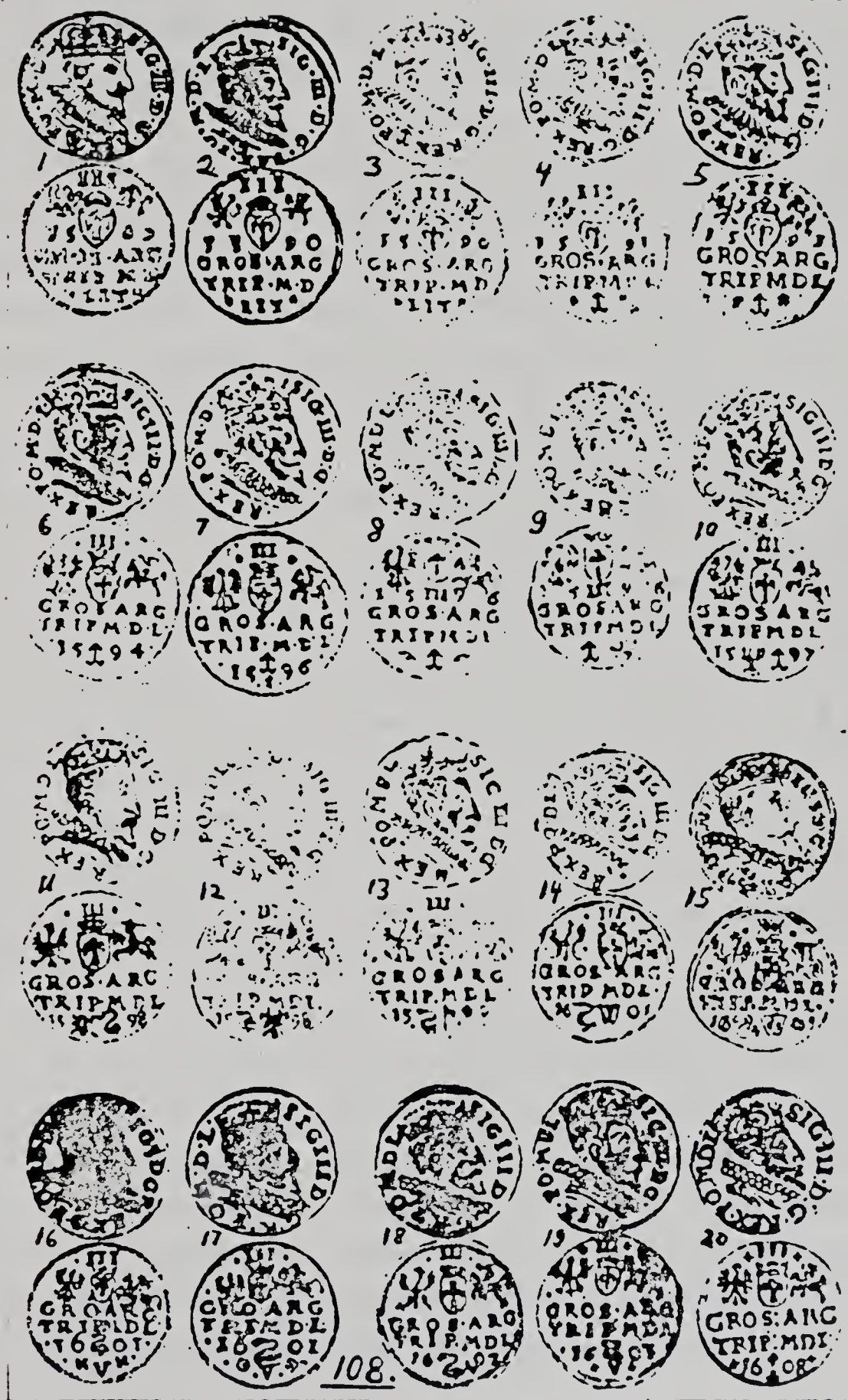


Figure 108. The 3-Grašiai of Sigismund Vasa.

in the post-Lublin times of the declining Grand Duchy. Exclusive of counterfeits and otherwise misstruck coins, we can establish the following averages for recovered 3-grašiai legal coins: Weight: 2.250 gr. silver content: 0.860. We will later discuss the 3-grašiai pieces of John Casimir and August the Saxon, which, one following the other, declined about half in value.

Perhaps Vasa would have finally ruined his 3-grašiai, if it were not for the complaints of foreigners which, let us assume, arrested the deterioration at its halfway point. The "inflation" of the same type Polish coins, related to this same unpleasantness, was cut off in 1601, with the closure of all mints (except at Cracow). After two years, the production of Lithuanian 3-grašiai was likewise stopped. We know nothing of what was planned with the resumption of production of the 3-grašiai, but they were also discontinued in that same year--1608. Apparently, the mint was conducting some sort of experiment. The final Lithuanian 3-grašiai are today reckoned as extreme rarities.

All the disorder in the sphere of Polish/Lithuanian money heretofore mentioned, and added to it the frequent foreign complaints, finally exhausted even the "activists" from the joint states, wallowing in the same swamp. Unable to reorganize, they determined the only "effective means" to administer a decisive blow to these inferior coins---close down all mints! And in 1627, they were all shut down. What the Lithuanian side thought (if they thought at all) of this, we know not, but we can guess about the hopes of the more active Poles---they hoped and believed that after this closure of the Vilnius coin mint, Lithuania would no longer have a propensity for its own coins....The last leasee of S. Vasa's Vilnius mint, Jakobson, left Lithuania. [NOTE: According to John Davenport's "European Crowns" at this point, the Grand Duchy produced three different silver talers in 1621: the 10 taler piece (weight 291 gr), the 6 taler (weight 164 gr.) and the 5 taler, weight unknown. All these talers were struck from the same dies used to produce the ducats, the difference in denomination to be determined by weight.]

Aside from silver coins, Sigismund Vasa struck an entire series of gold coins in Vilnius. His known single ducats for 1590 and 1591 in their weight, their "face," and legends are entirely similar to Stephan Batoras' Lithuanian ducats. Of course, the obverse contained Vasa's portrait and his name and titles inscribed; on the reverse--everything, other than the Vasa sheaf in the center, continued as in Batoras' 1586 ducat, just before his death. The traditional legend "Gold Coin of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania" (in Latin, "Moneta aurea Magni Ducatus Lithuaniae"), the date and the mark of the Lithuanian noble Sapiega, authoritatively guaranteeing the coin's authenticity.



Figure 110. The Ducats of Sigismund Vasa

The ducats of Vasa were still quite Lithuanian coins in the circumstances of the time. Both sides were struck according to traditional forms and valid statutes. Quite another situation applies to that same ruler's larger gold coins: on them Vasa begins to show his arbitrariness. Let us examine closely the pictures (Figures 111, 112, 113). The reverse is now different--only one Knight, and one Eagle of the original two remain. Vasa's native Swedish symbols (three crowns and a lion) fill the void. In some of the inscriptions there are included titles of the ruler hitherto unknown on Lithuanian coins. What is worse, on the obverse of the coins, surrounding his portrait, Sigismund Vasa begins to recount that he is King of Poland and Sweden (Rex. Pol. et Svec) entirely oblivious of the fact that he is Grand Duke of Lithuania (Figure 111/1); or by signifying on the reverse, that essential title on Lithuania's money, among many titles of lesser importance (Figure 111/2-4). And that was not enough. Vasa found a basis to strike in Vilnius not only queer gold coins, but even purely Polish ones (1 ducat), whose unpublicized purpose was to melt into one more quickly the two countries joined at Lublin, or at least to foster the impression that between them there really is no difference.

Clearly, a golden coin, however it was struck, was acceptable to all in those days. Merchants were not interested in the political aspects of the coins. However, to the Grand Duchy's nobles, notwithstanding their cohesion with the Poles, Lithuania did exist; not separate, independent, autonomous Lithuania, but a country which fostered them, piled up their wealth, where they could behave as "at home," and finally which they "represented" with great airs. They could have been displeased with the molting of Lithuanian coins by decorations foreign to them and to the reality of their country, so

there were also struck at Vilnius appropriate gold coins for the Grand Duchy, whose connection with the homeland was sufficiently clear (See Figure 112 and 113).



Figure 111. Gold Coins of Sigismund Vasa, Struck at Vilnius. Some are purely Polish (1, ducat), others of a mixed nature, as much "Lithuanian" as they were "Polish" (2, 3, ducats; 3, 5 ducats; 4-6 "Portugalers.").



The coins pictured here were produced at the Vilnius mint between 1604-1622. Dr. Gumowski places the beginning of this period later by five years, showing that: 1) the date of the "Portugaler" (Item 4) is erroneous, it had to be "1614;" 2) The Vilnius mint's gold coin section began a new series of activity with a crown ducat (Polish) dated "1609" (Item 1). We cannot agree with this assertion. In the first place, an error of ten years in the date on such a large gold coin, as was the 10 ducat "Portugaler," cannot be conceded. Gumowski's basic argument supporting the error---the mark of Lithuania's treasurer Valavičius on the coin--is used here unprofessionally. If Valavičius was approved to handle these tasks on February 28, 1605, it does not follow that this noble could not have been designated by the ruler to superintend gold coin production at Vilnius several months earlier (1604). Secondly, the silver and gold coin mints in Vilnius must primarily attend to the needs of Lithuania. How then can one speak of the fact that one of them began its task in "1609" with a Polish ducat, when Poland had its own mints? We can be sure that a Polish ducat was struck in Vilnius only among other jobs, for reasons not yet clear to us, while producing other gold coins there, and not specifically to open the mint for that purpose. All the circumstances of the time dictate that the said ducat was mixed in with other gold coins struck in Vilnius (without particular orders from some echelon of the Polish-Lithuanian state), and only for reasons of some type of experiment. It would also be logical to consider here the presence in Vilnius of some of the better Polish minters of the time.

Indeed, we also find in Gumowski's rationalizations this type of nonsense: he states that all gold coins struck in Vilnius, regardless of their marks, or their inscriptions, are "Lithuanian.".....Well, a ducat with the inscription "moneta Poloniae" he cannot even forceably coerce into Lithuanian numismatics. We have also determined upon a different interpretation of other gold pieces (or similar ones) pictured in Figure 111: they are to us neither "Lithuania" nor Polish! Technical facts like where, or by whose instruments the coin is produced can have absolutely no significance. Of importance is, to which country does the inscription ascribe it. So we are and will continue to be of this opinion, that only those coins of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (with no frivolous elucidations) belong to historical Lithuania, upon which we find sufficient signs attesting to their "Lithuanianess." While coins which lack such signs, or, most important, where "MONETA MAGNI DUCATUS LITHUANIAE" is missing, though they may have been

struck in Vilnius, or some other location in Lithuania, must be evaluated both historically and numismatically, much more scrupulously.

On what basis, disregarding the locale of striking, can we hold the pictured coins (Fig. 111/2-6) as coins of one particular country? On them, we find the portrait of the Polish king, the Lithuanian Grand Duke, and even the pretender of the Swedish throne. The crests--of Poland, Sweden, and Lithuania; the "original" of the portrait titles himself in the inscriptions even more than his three titles. On the other hand, there is no clarifying legend describing the country to which the coin pertains. So, a careful student can only state that they belong equally to Poland and to Lithuania, that they were quasi alliance coins of the two joint countries--not alone Lithuania's, nor alone Poland's. And since, as we have mentioned, Sweden also figures in them, they would also apply to that Scandinavian country (if the Swedes had not shaken off Sigismund Vasa in time...)

The Swedish marks and S. Vasa III title on Polish-Lithuanian coins tends to mislead rather than provide useful data. True, after the death of Sweden's King John III in 1592, S. Vasa became legal heir to Sweden's throne. Proceeding to Sweden, he accepted John's crown. However, in 1600, through the efforts of his uncle Karl, he was removed from the throne (dethroned). [This occurred because, upon accepting the throne of Poland-Lithuania, Vasa also accepted the Catholic religion, while his country was of the Protestant faith]. So, during the time these coins were being struck, our Sigismund was not king of Sweden. His constant pretensions to the forfeited throne proved entirely futile, and without necessity reverberated on Lithuania's and Poland's coins, usurping a space there for more essential information.

* * *

Sigismund Vasa left gold coins in Lithuania which were entirely correct for that period, with the clear inscription "MONETA...MAGNI DUCATUS LITUANIAE," even without that Swedish title of his. In this, he was inscribed as was fitting: "King of Poland and Grand Duke of Lithuania." Excepting that the Swedish emblems were not omitted, but here--they were just peculiar marks, giving no impression to the casual viewer.

As has become clear from available sources, Vasa struck gold coins larger than a ducat in Vilnius during 1615-18, that is, during the same period of activity of the mint, at whose start and end the mixed and even Polish coins mentioned above, were struck.



Figure 112. Sigismund Vasa's Grand Duchy Gold Coins
1) 3 ducats; 2) 5-ducat worth.

Compounded denominations of Lithuanian coins, (excepting the Swedish and mint officials' marks), were issued very similar to that same ruler's Grand Duchy ducats appearing earlier. Only the dates were displayed differently, worked into the ornamentation, and the legend on the reverse was supplemented with a new word: it was "moneta aurea"..., the inscription now became "MONETA NOVE AUREA M.D. LITUANIAE," that is to say, a new gold coin of the Grand Duchy. The denominations are indicated in Roman numerals: III, V, X (three, five, ten ducats).

We must admit that Sigismund Vasa, in the sphere of gold coins, outdistanced all historical Lithuania's rulers. The most varied and plentiful supply of gold coins with his portrait flooded the country. In addition, his coins for the times, were truly beautiful. The mint at Vilnius undoubtedly competed on a par with the mints of Europe, and in some cases, surpassed them.

The gold to produce coins, as silver also, must be purchased abroad. This was done by private merchants, suppliers. They visited the countries of Germany, explored Chechia, Austria, Hungary, and the



Figure 113. Sigismund Vasa's "Lithuanian Portugalers"
10 Ducat Coins.



gold they fished out there they brought back to Lithuania. They attempted to make payment with silver coins of their own country, whose baseness the gold purveyors failed to note until too late, or failed to note entirely. In this way, the suppliers profited in buying the gold and profited in selling it to the mint. In places, complaints were made against the suppliers and the coins they passed. Responsible officials there made investigations³⁰ but the clever merchants (the Germans nicknamed them "Muenzjuden") managed to avoid these obstacles and get away.

Gold coins in Lithuania (as much their own as foreign pieces; the latter surpassed by far domestic coins in circulation) were avidly sought after. Who would not have thirsted to obtain a red, fully valued coin, at a time when the debased silvers continued to drop from day to day? As soon as the ducats appeared in circulation, they disappeared. Their rating in silver grašis rose and rose. A black market money "exchange" developed, with speculation. Congress often attempted to establish and maintain a stable relationship between the ducat and a reasonable number of grašis, but no positive results were reached. Notwithstanding the interposition of the government, gold coins continued to rise. For example, in 1590 it was still possible to exchange on the market for a ducat 58 silver grašiai. In 1616, 75 were required for it. In 1619, it was 90. While in 1627, even up to 160 grašių! Understandably, such a speedy rise in value was caused not merely by the "thinning" of silver coins. The deplorably bad condition of the national economy also had an impact. The presentiment of an uncertain future, and the continual money speculation, all these factors contributed to the shipping away of our gold pieces abroad, with no hope of return.

All the circumstances and causes of those days ordained that today we know so little of the gold coins of the Grand Duchy. And where there are not sufficient recoveries, it is very difficult to reach sound conclusions. We still do not know if all the gold beauties struck in Lithuania have been found. From the known specimens it appears that S. Vasa struck most of all the 10 ducat coins "(Portugalers)", but even of these, it is doubtful that all types have appeared.

Rumors of S. Vasa's gold coin in the value of 100 ducats have not been confirmed. [*]

[*] At the time this book was written (1950's), the author was probably justified in his skepticism. When this was being translated (October 1980) the Stack sale of September 18th brought out the 1621 100-ducat gold coin, sold to James U. Blanchard III, of Dallas, Texas, for \$120,000. Only two specimens are known, the other in the National Museum in Cracow, Poland, part of the Count Hutten-Czapski collection. As described in WORLD COIN NEWS, the coin is "Splendidly detailed and artistically executed. It portrays Sigismund, a Polish King from the Swedish house of Vasa, and an elaborate rendering of the Polish-Lithuanian royal arms. On this coin, Sigismund claims to be King of Poland and Sweden (the Swedes never recognized his claim), Grand Duke of Lithuania, and Duke of Russia, Prussia, Masovia, Samogitia (the Lowlands), Livonia, and Courland." The coin weighs almost a full troy pound (12 ounces).

At the Michigan State Numismatic Society's Fall 1980 show, this supplementer had the joy of examining this 100 ducat personally and holding it in his hand!

³⁰ There is data about this in T. Hirsch "Muenzarchiv des Deutschen Reiches", (III, 136, 144, 200, etc.).

corruption of the purchasers of the metal. The old Lithuanian 3-grašiai was valued in Germany at 6 Kreuzers, and no one felt defrauded. At this time, neither Lithuanian or Polish 3-grašiai were worth even 5 "Kreuzers," and the counterfeits--even less. Experiments were made in Vienna in 1602 which attested that the Polish 3 groshes were very poor coins, and the Lithuanian 3-grašiai were, in general, the same. Recalling the good pre-Lublin 3-grašiai, of which a part was designated by the names "didka" and "ditka," the Germans ironically named the present Vasa 3-grašiai "deuttchen."

The images on Vasa's 3-grašiai pieces are very similar to those same images on Batoras' like coins. On the obverse side we see the ruler's bust, around which is inscribed his name and titles (translated from the Latin: "Sigismund III, by the grace of God, King of Poland and Grand Duke of Lithuania.)). On the reverse are struck the Polish, Lithuanian, and Vasa's crests, the date of the coin and that same old Latin legend, "III A TRIPLE SILVER GRAŠIS OF THE L. GRAND DUCHY." (3-grašiai). The Vasa sheaf stands between the state crests, with the Lithuanian Knight pushed from the second to third place. Other marks and symbols noted on one or the other side of the 3-grašiai belong to officials of the Mint (Treasurer of Lithuania, the mint's leasees, minters, etc. Some are known, others are forgotten). The letters "W" or "V", when there is room for them, designate the locale of the Mint: Vilnius.

In 1602 an attempt was made in Vilnius to strike a 3-grašiai piece on a diamond-shaped planchet (See Figure 109). That is a repercussion in Lithuanian numismatics of Scandinavian coins. However, such "pocket cutting" coins found no favor with us.

The Lithuanian triple grašiai of Vasa were not the very poorest of that type coin,

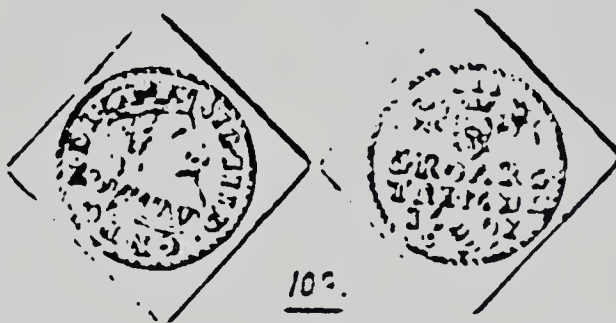


Figure 109. The diamond-shaped triple-grašiai of S. Vasa in Vilnius.

The next ruler of Poland/Lithuania, Vladislovas, son of Sigismund Vasa, did not produce any Lithuanian coins. During his reign (1632-1648) only one mint was activated in Poland (Bydogoshch), there beautiful medals and large gold coins were minted, all for Poland. Vladislovas was of the opinion that all monetary affairs relating to the joint state belonged generally to the "Rzeczpospolita," to which his father at the end of his reign had conceded all income from the mints. The Vilnius mint, closed in 1627, remained inactive, though its most important officers did not leave town. The well-known mint specialist, H. Trylneris, wrote many memos, seeking to renew the mint's activity, but his efforts were barren. Receiving 600 "zloti" a month salary, he provided sketches for medals that were ordered, conducted examinations of various coins assigned by the country's Treasurer, and evaluated foreign coins.

The country's own coins, long unreplenished, became rarer in circulation. Foreign coins, frequently of very poor real value, flooded the country--at times, there were even counterfeit. The long war with the Swedes, and the excesses of the Swedish army in Lithuania provided a swarm of Swedish coins here, which local inhabitants did not know how to use. All these misfortunes ruined even more the collapsing economy of Lithuania. There was much talk in the joint Congresses in Poland about the dire need for reform. Specialized committees studied the Polish/Lithuanian monetary problems for years. Regretfully, there was no one to organized that idle talk into a concrete plan and to implement that plan.

At the death of Vladislovas in 1648, his brother John Casimir Vasa, a former monk risen to a cardinal's cap, climbed into the joint throne, having resigned his eminent spiritual titles "in the name of necessity of the supreme throne of Poland..." He was neither a suitable ruler, nor a good administrator, nor, let us be frank, a man worthy of the name. He had no clearly defined plans as a statesman, but gave himself up blindly to the current trend. Whether his counselor's advice was good or bad, as ruler he did not explore them nor even consider them. His wife, the French Maria Louise (widow of his brother Vladislovas) meant more in the royal palace than he did himself. And, as the Poles say, "gdzie baba rządzi, tam i djabeł błędzi"--"where a woman rules, even the devil himself could not operate..."

Once again, this time in the days of John Casimir, and for the last time, money of the Grand Duchy was struck in Vilnius. However, before we discuss them, we must recall a few facts and circumstances, which in this connection had decisive significance. We have already noted that the ruler did not distinguish himself for self-reliance, but graciously bowed either way his advisors would lead him, or as his wife would suggest. So, whatever transpired in the state, occurred without the active participation of the head of the state. The state suffered. The nobles and the boyars constantly raised their own problems, and with the utmost stubbornness defended and amplified their already over-extended rights, while the vital issues of the "Rzeczpospolita" were systematically overlooked, relegated to the last place, unattended, forgotten. If someone more foresighted would bring up a wholesome suggestion, which seemed to merit further consideration, some idiot would stand up in the congress with that terrible "liberum veto" instrument, to suppress that idea once for all. No majority of the congress could overcome the "veto" of any one representative. Even if the ruler, let us say, had been his own man, and had abilities superior to those of John Casimir, even in that case it would have been difficult to find a way out of such chaos, rooted in the egotistical spirit of the nobles, striving to be "great" in the class of boyars, and through that class, in the structure of the entire state. Under those circumstances, John Casimir naturally turned to take care of himself, and his beloved wife. The ship of state floated without a captain.

Mismanagement grew in the country. Once again the Cossacks of the Ukraine arose. The state suffered incursions of foreign troops (Swedish, Russian, Tatars, Cossacks). Cities and manors were attacked, despoiled. Moscow occupied the capital of the Grand Duchy, Vilnius. Later, Gardinas, and even Kaunas. The Swedes marched through other portions of Lithuania/Poland. Commerce fell and disrupted not only with foreign contacts but even domestically. Agriculture completely disintegrated. Only fortuitous circumstances, fortunately (which we have no time to describe) preserved the joint state, and with the withdrawal of the enemy, it continued its sad life within well-trimmed borders, but its tragic end inevitably approached...

The peasants, that fundamental element of a well organized state and the salt in its earth were further neglected. Its families, given about 21 hectares of land in the time of Sigismund August, were growing, despite wars and plagues. The land was constantly divided into smaller portions. Feeding the people became increasingly more difficult. They worked for the nobility on its manors several days a week without compensation. They actually "belonged" to the local gentry,

had no citizenship rights, and nowhere could they find even a modicum of justice. Piled on their backs were duties, taxes, every type of tribute to their ruler, to their nobles, their officials, to the rectory, while the boyar clergy, accustomed to Polish tradition, preaching everlasting happiness after death, taught them uncditioned obedience and loyalty to those who, while they were still on this earth, exploited them cruelly and wronged them.

In general, during the Vasa' reigns, the Lithuanian/Polish state decayed from the top to its roots, faster than at any time before. The final wreck of this two-masted ship upon the rocks heaped up by the helmsman himself awaited only the critical moment. Unable to steer his "ship" into a more salutary course, John Casimir, it is said, grieved to heart-break. Regretfully, that was not enough. "The ruler without a regime" appealed to heaven. On April 1, 1657 at Lvov, he solemnly offered his state to "Mary, Mother of God", beseeching her assistance to resist three most dangerous enemies: the Russians, the Swedes, and ---internal disorder. Help of course, failed to arrive. In these circumstances, he was able to think of nothing else except to remove from his head that increasingly heavier crown. And he began to debate this contingency with others, suggesting that it might improve conditions to elect his successor while he was still alive. Since the marriage of John Casimir with Maria Louisa brought no heir, and all close relatives of the Vasa family had died, why should he spend his remaining old age suffering from this heavy royal yolk?! On the other hand, if he abdicated in time, perhaps the Poles and Lithuanians would select as their ruler the French Prince Conde, on whose behalf Queen Maria Louisa, the nearest person to John Casimir, was anxiously straining.

This solution faced strong opposition. The nobles declared that the King must continue to reign until death. Only then would they consider another, and would elect whomsoever they willed. John Casimir had to be still. And suddenly, another incident jolted the ruler personally: his beloved wife died. Depressed and finally chagrined with everything, John Casimir executed for the first time, probably in his life, an historic deed resolved by himself: in 1668, he abdicated, in tears to a weeping congress, from both thrones, and left with 150,000 "Zloti" yearly pension, for his wife's never forgotten homeland, France. Thereafter a few years, he died.

* * *

When John Casimir ascended the Cracow throne after Vladislov, he ran into the terrible financial situation of the state first of all. The treasury was empty. The army demanded its wages, which had not been paid for quite

a while. The receipts of the Polish-Lithuanian state, because of economic disruption in both countries, were neither clearly stated nor sufficient. The nobles and boyars, feeling themselves to be the masters of the state, at every opportunity lessened their financial obligations to the state and to the King and Grand Duke. A large and ever increasing part of the public taxes was gathered up in their snouts (by privileged foreign trade, by liquor and beer breweries, by manor stores) before payment into the Treasury.

This condition compelled the King and Congress to consider seriously the emission of new monies, which alone could produce sufficient funds to cover governmental expenses, both of Lithuania and Poland. Since existing monetary regulations were no longer effective, the Warsaw Congress of 1649 appointed a special committee to prepare new regulations. In the following year, the necessary regulations became statutory and, it is said, quite well prepared. However, it soon became clear that striking good coins realized no profit for the state. Never in the past had there been so many changes in this regard, as were done in the reign of John Casimir. The regulations were changed constantly, the coins themselves were debased with regularity, just to increase the income to the treasury. Any other effect of such money upon the country's economy it seems, was neither foreseen nor understood.

Neither Lithuania's representatives nor its Treasurer participated in the sessions of the Warsaw Congressional Committee of 1649-50, so the new regulations did not affect Vilnius. Several coin mints in Poland began rumbling. The Grand Duchy remained awaiting some advice, but in vain. Vilnius then made its own decision, which deeply disturbed the Poles. In that same year, having apparently received at least a verbal approval from John Casimir, the Treasurer of Lithuania, G. Tryzna let the Vilnius mint begin its work, and it soon placed into circulation an entire series of coins, not only inappropriate to that Polish regulation, but even "insolently Lithuanian" (showing the Polish eagle on one out of every 6 coins; on all others, the Vytis (Knight) alone).

The new Vilnius mint coins also proved inferior to its earlier ones. This was the third reason why the Poles, as quickly as never before, leaped to examine that same year, why things were done thus and not otherwise. Most important, why Lithuania's coins were not comparable in real value with the newest Polish coins, issued following the statute of 1650. And other "inaccuracies" caused the Poles problems: a clear case of separatism, ignoring Poland's crest, and in general--downgrading the Act of Lublin and its spirit. In July 1652, the Congress designated a separate commission of senators and representatives who were to meet October 7th in Vilnius and there thoroughly examine Lithuanian coins and the reforms of the

mint. And the commission must render to the following session of congress an accounting of its findings.

Though the majority of the Commission's members were "Lithuanians," the "revolution" of Treasurer Tryzna was condemned. He could not defend himself because at that time he was ill, and soon died. His successor, Vincent Gonsievskis (a drake?) could not withstand the pressure from the commission: the Vilnius coin mint had to close down in 1653. The Russian army occupied Vilnius in 1655. We must assume that it then destroyed that institution.

During that short period of activity, the Vilnius mint struck coins very interesting to Lithuanian numismatics, though not in great volume, starting with the shillings and ending with the 6 grašiai. Always on these coins was designated the value in fitures, in relationship to the official taler. Earlier, everything revolved around the grašis. Based upon the composition of the metal, all these coins belonged to the category of billon coins, since the silver content was lower than 0.500. However in numismatics, they are called silver.



Figure 114. The Grand Duchy's silver (billon) shillings, struck at Vilnius during the reign of John Casimir. No. 6 is suspect, No. 7 is counterfeit, which is enlarged 2:1.

These coins, among the very smallest silvers of that period, were generally termed, "little shillings," since they were substantially smaller than the earlier Lithuanian shillings. They were struck in 1652-53. Example #6 shows an incomplete date (154) as if to indicate that these shillings were produced even in 1654, though the noticeable discrepancies in monogram and inscriptions raise the suspicion that these specimens are falsified, just as similar shillings of 1661-62 are counterfeit. (See Fig. 114/7)

As was signified on the coins themselves on the beginning issues, 360 of them equalled one taler. And since the cost of the taler then reached 90 grašiu, then in that figure of "360" we note the beginning of valuation of the grašis in shillings: not at three, as it was in the days of Stephan Batoras and Sigismund III, but now at four. However, the larger coins, being bought with constantly debased smaller coins, advanced in price by degrees, while the new shillings, "little shillings," were in reality not only the smallest but the cheapest coins, so they could not remain in a stable relationship with the taler. Realizing this situation, responsible officials of the mint removed the "360" from the shillings that same year 1652, and found no reason to repeat it on later issues. It sufficed that it was possible to equate four shillings to one grašis for a considerable time. The genuine taler in Poland/Lithuania became an unreachable "ace."

John Casimir's shillings weighed about 0.530 gr. each, with pure silver content an average of 0.066 gr. each. We will see later that in this same year there was projected and struck in Vilnius a grašis of that same ruler whose real value actually reached par with four shillings. The figure "360" found on several recovered shillings suggested to some numismatist-collectors the conclusion that there was in Lithuania still another type of small coin--a heller--as there had been at one time in some of the Germanic countries. However, the first Vilnius shillings of John Casimir had no connection with foreign monies. Even more were they in error who termed the recovered shillings with "360" as denars. H. Czapski, in his catalogue (V, CXIS) similarly captions this type as "denar," but at the same time cautions that such a coin is counted among the counterfeits.

The first shillings were issued without inscriptions. Only the Knight and the figures appear. The monogram is made up of three letters, I C R. In Latin this stands for "Ioannes Casimirus Rex" (John Casimir King).³¹ On shillings

³¹The intelligensia translated those three letters into an ironic sentence: "Initium Calamitatis Regni"--"The beginning of the state's misfortunes." It seems to us that this intelligence is somewhat tardy. The misfortunes of Poland/Lithuania began much earlier than John Casimir's seating on the squeaking Cracow throne.

struck later, the ruler supplemented the inscription to read that he is by the grace of God "Rex Poloniae Lituaniae;" the "M.D. (Magnus Dux) is omitted. This is a clear misstatement of the legal situation. How can that be justified? The Mint's directorial officials could not conscientiously ignore the fact that the ruler astride the throne in Cracow was not "King of Poland and Lithuania," but King of Poland and Grand Duke of Lithuania. Both these titles, contained on other coins, had to be placed on the shillings. Apparently, the person cutting the dies ran short of space for all letters and omitted the letters of "minor import," and the Treasurer, answerable for everything, failed to notice the defect, or did not judge it seriously. In those days few in general felt deeply of such problems.

The inscription on the reverse is correct: "Solidus Magni Ducatus Lituaniae" (understandably, abbreviated). The year of emission on some issues is at the monogram, on others, on the Knight's side. The Knight covers the entire field on the coins. Below the Knight can be seen several signs: on the 1652 issue shillings (as well as on others of the same year Vilnius mint coins) there is the crest of Lithuania's Treasurer, G. Tryzna, on the 1653 issue, that of V. Gonsievskis.

It is very characteristic that all of John Casimir's coins, with the exception of one "paltarok" (1 1/2 grašis) were struck without the Polish eagle, which Stephan Batoras had made mandatory for Grand Duchy coins. Perhaps this generally weak ruler understood that Lithuania, joining with Poland, was not obliged to become some sort of Polish province, which the Poles undoubtedly desired, and the Lithuanian nobility, steadily Polonizing, opposed little or not at all...

* * *

Copper Shillings----"Baratinkas"

It frequently happens in life that when a state finds itself facing disaster, all sorts of adventurers crawl from under the rug with their fantasies as though to save it, but in reality---scavenging for their own benefit. Such an incident happened to Poland/Lithuania during the wars waged with the Moscovites and Swedes, when a previously little-known Italian, Boratini, ranging about here since 1641, offered to restore the disordered finances of the state. According to the 1658 project of his, briefly stated: for a start, there had to be copper shillings in the sum of two million Polish "zloti" struck, in its way "credit money" with a mandatory rate of three for 1 grašis or grosh established. And with this almost

intangible "play money" (from a value standpoint), the state would begin to pay off all its debts. First of all, the long delayed wages of soldiers fighting at the front would be paid. Of course, no one believed that two million "zloti" would suffice to pay all the state's debts. For one thing, the joint state's army required about 34 million, and then, what about the other debts? If these coppers would be favorably received in circulation, Boratini could sniff big things ahead, just as a drowning man grasping at a straw...

The Financial Commission of Congress accepted Boratini's plan in 1659, and he "modestly" agreed to accomplish production of the new coins by his own efforts. The following year witnessed the start of hasty work. Since at that time, Lithuania was occupied by Russian troops, the first millions of Lithuanian copper shillings (in the sume of 1 million "zloti") were struck in 1660-61 at the Polish coin mint of Ujazdav (near Warsaw), where similar Polish coins were being produced. On behalf of the government these and other coppers were supervised and their mandatory rate was established on December 1, 1659 ("all persons may be assured that these coins ply throughout the kingdom, and they must accept them, use them and if necessary spend them") by the Crown's Treasurer John Casimir Krasinski, whose crest is placed on the Lithuanian shillings.

But there was need for many more of those coppers than was planned at the beginning. So in 1663, the government authorized the production and issuance of another 5 million "zloti" of the copper shillings for both countries. One mint alone was unable to satisfy in time these urgent demands, so soon an entire series of mints in Poland and Lithuania began processing. The material was supplied by the copper foundries in Sillesia, Hamburg, Lubeck, and in the Germanic countries. To speed up the production of the mints, orders were initiated for copper plates in the shape of planchets, it remained only for the mints to strike in the dies. As a result, in 6 or 7 years over 12 million "zloti" of the said shillings were struck in Poland and Lithuania. Of that sum, in Lithuania alone about 6 million "zloti" were flooded into circulation---approximately 540 million copper coins (4 million sufficed for the army, neary 2 million "zloti" worth went for other matters). According to Gumowski, even more were circulated in Poland.³²

As we have noted, millions of the first Lithuanian copper shillings were struck in Poland (at Ujazdav). In 1663, George F. Horn

³²"Mennica Wilenska," Page 163.

prepared them at his Olivo mint, in Germany. In 1664-66, Boratini himself struck them at L. Brast. In 1665, after the Olivo mint had been transferred to Kaunas, the same shillings were struck here for several years. Thus, Lithuanian coppers were produced at four different plants--at least, those have been definitely identified. However, we doubt that they could have struck about 540 million Lithuania shillings in those few years. It seems to us that among that gigantic number (for those years) of coins which accumulated in the Lithuanian economy, there must have been a sizeable proportion of Polish coppers, produced by that same Boratini in Poland, where the coin mints were more prolific than the hurriedly opened L. Brast or the Kaunas mints. Both countries' copper shillings are very similar, the same ruler's portrait appeared on them, so it was not difficult for Boratini to supplement Lithuania's requirements with the inventory of Poland's mints--and the admixture of Polish shillings in our hoards, which are found in our country, seem to substantiate this. Regretfully, in the absence of specific records, it is impossible today to establish these data with accuracy.

The copper shillings of both Lithuania and Poland were put into circulation in Lithuania and Poland at the same mandatory exchange rate---three to the silver grašis or grosh. This rate was harsh: from a pound of copper, costing then 15 grašis, 300 shillings were struck. So from a silver grašis, at least 20 copper shillings could be weighed in, and not just three. So that these debased petty coins could sustain the economic life of the country only apparently, the rate was set as it was. Soon the other side of the coin "began to become visible, the country's economy began to fail even more, and the results clearly produced a negative curve. The financial "adventure" of Boratini and other "economists-advisors" of John Casimir was felt in the "Republic" even in the following century. The catastrophe was intensified not only by inflation caused by the legal copper shillings, but also by numerous counterfeits. The falsifiers found it easy to produce those coins from soft, cheap copper, and they poured masses of them into circulation, as many Polish as Lithuanian. Since the legal shillings, hurriedly prepared and without proper control, did not distinguish themselves by perfection, so the counterfeits among them seemed genuine. It was difficult even then to distinguish between them. It is even more so today to separate the true from the false.

* * *

When a few years had passed after the introduction of the coppers, it became patently clear to many the oppressive results upon the cost produce, wages, on balances of earlier commitments and on other fields of economic life these tiny coins had and continued to have,

if their issuance was not halted. So somewhat belatedly, it was comprehended in the royal circle that comparatively modest Boratini plan was leading toward a financial monster, and the appetites of the planner himself and other persons who handled production of these coppers, would not quickly subside. They were stupified by the intoxicant of quick riches. After paying for the copper and paying into the Treasury the agreed upon commission (in 1664, by contract with Boratini--57% of circulation), the leasees received 84 shillings from a pound of copper legally struck into coins, or about 28 grašiai or groshes.³³ Keeping in mind that wages of laborers were low, and methods of striking these coppers were not complicated, we can estimate how much a striker could earn in a day, a month or even a year. And poor governmental control failed to hinder any shenanigans...

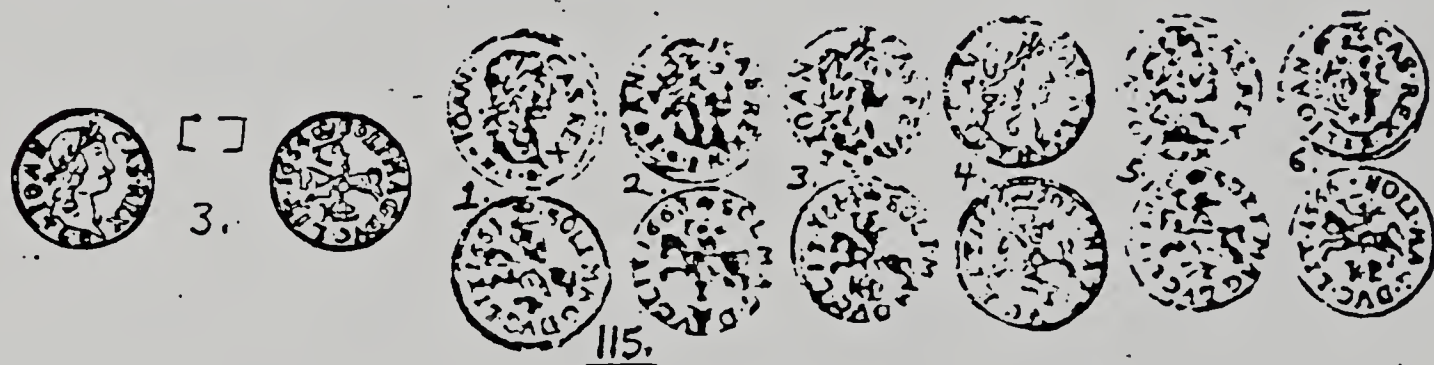


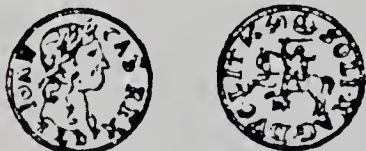
Figure 115. The Grand Duchy's Copper Shillings (Baratinkas)

Complaints began to be received in appropriate governmental agencies from which it appeared that the said coins were undesirable not only in our own country, but also abroad, that they did not foster trade, but actually destroyed it, that everyone disdained them so that costs of commodities and of services soared by leaps and bounds. Neighboring countries began to protect themselves from them as if from a plague. On February 12, 1666, Prussia officially closed its frontiers to them. In our own countries, even the poorest silver coins fled from their path engaging in "black market" operations without end.

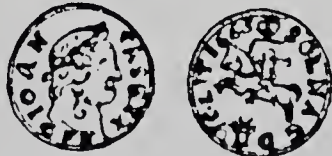
³³"Mennica Wilenska," page 164.

[below]

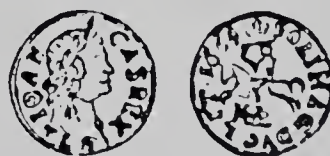
Struck at Ujazdow:



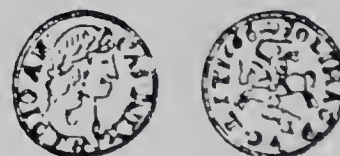
Struck at Oliwa:



Struck at Brasta:



Struck at Kaunas:



Struck at Malbork: (1666 only)

